

# Virginia Department of Historic Resources

## PIF Resource Information Sheet

This information sheet is designed to provide the Virginia Department of Historic Resources with the necessary data to be able to evaluate the significance of the property for possible listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This is not a formal nomination, but a necessary step in determining whether or not the property could be considered eligible for listing. Please take the time to fill in as many fields as possible. A greater number of completed fields will result in a more timely and accurate assessment. Staff assistance is available to answer any questions you have in regards to this form.

<b>General Property Information</b>	For Staff Use Only DHR ID #: 227-5003
Property Name(s): <u>Thomas Claiborne Creasy House/Lavalette House</u>	
Property Date(s): <u>1825;1883; 1923</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Circa <input type="checkbox"/> Pre <input type="checkbox"/> Post    Open to Public? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Limited <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Property Address: <u>415 S. Main Street</u> City: <u>Gretna</u> Zip: <u>24557</u>	
County or Ind. City: <u>Pittsylvania - Gretna</u> USGS Quad(s): <u>Gretna</u>	

### Physical Character of General Surroundings

Acreage: 13    Setting (choose one):    ☐ Urban    ☒ Town    ☐ Village    ☐ Suburban    ☐ Rural    ☐ Transportation Corridor

Site Description Notes/Notable Landscape Features: This dwelling sits at the northeast corner of the intersection of U.S. Route 29 and U.S. Route 40 (S. Main Street and Vaden Street) and within the boundaries of the Town of Gretna. The parcel is heavily wooded and the house sits near the center of the lot. A board fence edges the lot on the south and west sides; railroad tracks run along the east side of the lot beyond a stand of trees. A partially paved driveway leads to the front (north side) of the house where a concrete sidewalk edged with boxwoods leads to the main entrance. An additional gravel parking area is located to the north. A concrete sidewalk extends from the west side porch towards Main Street. Dense vegetation is located on the north, east, and south sides of the parcel.

Secondary Resource Description (Briefly describe any other structures (or archaeological sites) that may contribute to the significance of the property: In addition to the **historic house**, the property contains **a stable, a cook's house, and a garage**, all of which date to the early twentieth century. A well, covered with a concrete cap, likely dates to the late nineteenth century. A family **cemetery** is located on the south end of the property. A smokehouse formerly stood on the east side of the house. A carriage house, ice house, and corn crib also formerly stood on the property. These were demolished in the early twentieth century and the present stable built near those sites. The present garage is the second such building on the property and stands where an earlier garage and Creasy's office formerly were located.

Ownership Category:    ☒ Private    ☐ Public-Local    ☐ Public-State    ☐ Public-Federal

### Individual Resource Information

What was the historical use of this resource? Examples include: Dwelling, Grist Mill, Bridge, Store, Tobacco Barn, etc...

Dwelling

What is the current use? (if other than the historical use) Commercial (Restaurant)

Architectural style or elements of styles: Italianate, Colonial Revival, Craftsman

Architect, builder, or original owner: Thomas Claiborne Creasy, original owner

# of stories 2.5    Condition:    ☒ Excellent    ☐ Good    ☐ Fair    ☐ Deteriorated    ☐ Poor    ☐ Ruins    ☐ Rebuilt    ☐ Renovated

Are there any known threats to this property? None known

### Resource Component Information

Please answer the following questions regarding the individual components of the resource. If the component does not exist, answer “n/a.” If you feel uncomfortable in answering the question, please leave the space blank. Photographs of the features can also help our staff identify specific feature components. Usually, priority is given to describing features on the primary (front) facade of the structure.

**Foundation:** Describe the foundation that supports the structure. Examples include piers, continuous brick, poured concrete.  
Continuous Brick

**Structure:** Describe the primary structural component of the resource. Include primary material used. Examples include log, frame (sawn lumber), and brick. Also include the treatment, such as a particular brick bond or type of framing, if known.  
Wood frame

**Walls:** Describe the exterior wall covering such as beaded weatherboard or asbestos shingles.  
Weatherboard siding, pressed metal siding

**Windows:** Describe the number, material, and form of the primary windows. This includes the number of panes per sash, what the sashes are made of, and how the sashes operate (are they hinged or do they slide vertically) Have the windows been replaced? The house retains its original wooden, double-hung sashes that consist of paired and single Craftsman style windows featuring four vertical panes with small square panes at the top over two panes. Also present are original six-over-six and large two-over-two wooden sashes. Many windows and doors contain beveled glass panes.

**Porch:** Briefly describe the primary (front) porch. List the primary material, shape of the porch roof, and other defining details. The one-story porch wraps around the north and west sides of the house. The porch features a raised brick foundation with wooden Doric columns set on wooden bases and brick piers. The columns carry a wooden cornice with shaped wooden brackets. Other features include turned wooden balusters with a molded handrail and a beaded board ceiling. The porch is covered by a hipped roof of standing seam metal

**Roof:** Describe the roof, listing the shape and the covering material.  
The current front section of the house (north) consists of a central front-facing gable roof with shed extensions on the east and west. A side-facing gable is located behind (south of) that section with a shed roof extending over the sleeping porch at the southwest corner. Two gable-roofed ells project from the rear of the house.

**Chimney(s):** List the number of chimneys and the materials used. Include the brick bond pattern if possible.  
The front section of the house holds two, wide, brick interior chimneys with single shoulders. Two additional brick interior chimneys are located along the ridgeline of the side-facing gable section and a stout brick chimney is located at the center of the roof ridgeline on the rear ell.

**Architectural Description of Individual Resource:** *(Please describe architectural patterns, types, features, additions, remodelings, or other alterations. A sketch of the current floor plan would be appreciated.)*

At present, this resource appears as a two-and-a-half story, three-bay-wide dwelling. The origins of the house, however, are found in the two-story, two-bay-wide section that presently comprises the rear ell. That section, consisting of two rooms over two rooms, is believed to have been built around 1825 and was present on the property when Thomas Claiborne Creasy purchased it in the late nineteenth century. Creasy added a two-and-a-half story section to the north end of the existing dwelling, connecting the two sections by a hyphen. The ca. 1880 section was a typical frame I-house that faced north towards the burgeoning village of Elba (later, Gretna). In 1923, after Creasy's widow's death, daughter Maude and her husband, Stover H. Creasy, added another three-bay, center hall section to the north of the house, in effect doubling the footprint of the house. All sections of the house were executed with similar materials and combine to form a unified appearance.

The dwelling is set on a high basement of red brick laid in a common bond pattern of inconsistent stretcher and header-course intervals. The house is of wood frame construction clad with weatherboard. The intersecting gables of the roof are clad with standing seam metal. Fenestration consists of single and paired Craftsman-style windows that consist of an upper sash of four vertical panes with small square panes at the top and a two-pane lower sash. Doors are generally multi-light types and many retain their original beveled glass panes. The front entrance, located on the north side of the house, features a Craftsman-style, multi-pane door flanked by multi-light sidelights and transom.

Distinctive architectural features on the house include the wide, one-story columned porch that wraps around the north and west sides of the house, the second-floor enclosed sleeping porch on the southwest corner of the house, and the bay window inserted on the west side of the ca. 1825 ell. In 2008, a one-story ell was added to the south end of the house to facilitate the use of the building as a restaurant. This ell holds a large kitchen and pantry space. The ell is set on a poured concrete foundation, is sheathed with weatherboard, and is covered by a standing-seam gable roof.

The interior reflects the blending of the various construction phases of the house. The north entrance leads into a center hall, which is flanked to either side by large rooms, each with a fireplace on the exterior wall. The room on the east (right) was a library and retains its original boxed beamed ceiling. The main staircase with a curving handrail and turned balusters is located in the center hall. A cased opening with slender Doric columns marks the connection between the 1923 and 1883 sections of the house. A second staircase is located in that part of the center hall. Two parlors, which connect to the front parlors, flank the 1880 center hall; each room has a fireplace on the interior wall. The remaining part of the first floor is taken up by food preparation and storage areas for the restaurant operations.

The second floor of the house is retained as domestic space and is accessed by both sets of stairs. Bedrooms with shared baths flank the wide center hall. An enclosed stair in the upstairs center hall leads up to the large attic space. A door at the south end of the hall leads onto the enclosed sleeping porch and east side porch. The upper floor of the ca. 1825 ell also is accessed from that porch.

The character of the house is enhanced by the presence of many family antiques, photographs, and portraits. Many of the original light fixtures (chandeliers and sconces) are extant and modern intrusions have been kept to a minimum. Floors are generally heart pine with wide baseboards and walls are plaster. A beaded wainscot is present in the southeast parlor (known as the music room) and the two rear bedrooms on the second floor. Original door and window surrounds and mantelpieces are also present.

The historical context of the dwelling is enhanced by the presence of numerous early-twentieth-century outbuildings including a two-story, frame cook's house, a two-level frame stable, and a brick garage. The Creasy Family Cemetery is located on the south end of the property and contains over a dozen graves. The property also retains its lush vegetation and large trees. Several trees have fallen in recent storms, but the property retains a wooded character.

**Significance Statement:** Briefly note any significant events, personages, and/or families associated with the property.

(Detailed family genealogies are not necessary.) Please list all sources of information. It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or genealogies to this form. Normally, only information contained on this form will be posted for consideration by the State Review Board.

This resource is significant for its association with Thomas Claiborne Creasy (1839-1910) and the Creasy family, as well as for its architectural character. In the early nineteenth century, Creasy's family lived in Campbell County. Although Thomas' father, George, was a farmer, Thomas was listed in the 1860 census as a store clerk living in Lynchburg. Thomas joined the Confederate Army in 1862, serving with the 11<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry. He was taken as a prisoner of war to Fort Columbus, New York Harbor, then transferred to Fort Delaware before returning south in a prisoner exchange. He remained with the 11<sup>th</sup> VA Infantry and was wounded in action at Drewry's Bluff in 1864. He was paroled at Charlotte Court House following the end of the conflict.

Creasy returned to civilian life as a businessman dealing in merchandise in the small community of Hill Grove in Pittsylvania County. He remained there until 1884, when he moved to Elba (later Gretna). In Elba, Creasy and his brother Robert engaged in operating a general merchandise store and the acquisition of real estate in the growing new town. Creasy purchased much of the land sold by Jeremiah Talbott for the founding of the new town and at the time of his will (1897), Creasy retained about 100 acres in the town, including the 50 acres on which his residence stood.

Creasy's local business endeavors included backing new railroad lines, establishing a post office in Elba, serving as bank president, establishing the first telephone company in the town, building the first hotel, and donating land for the first local school for white children, the Masonic Lodge, and local churches. Creasy also was a director of one of Elba's early and prosperous tobacco warehouse companies. His family continued Creasy's generosity after his death and donated land for additional churches and public infrastructure. Creasy's public offices included Justice of the Peace, mayor, and postmaster. The brick storehouse that Creasy and his brother built in 1881(#227-5002-0017) is the oldest resource in the NRHP-listed Gretna Downtown Historic District and is one of the few remaining landmarks from the town's early days.

On May 26, 1880, Creasy married Eliza Lavalette Elliot of Charlotte Court House. The Creasy residence has remained in the family from 1880 to the present time. Creasy willed his property to his wife and at her death, the property was inherited by their daughter Maude. The property presently is owned by Creasy's great grandson, Cecil Arthur Creasy, Jr., and his wife. Creasy's prominence as a businessman was attained while he resided in this dwelling, which is among the finest homes in the town. The property retains a very high level of integrity and its context is enhanced by the presence of remaining outbuildings (dating to ca. 1923), as well as the historic downtown to the north.

The Thomas Claiborne Creasy House is also significant as an example of a dwelling that transitioned from a modest, two-over-two frame dwelling of the early nineteenth century, to a larger center hall house in the late nineteenth century, and finally to its present appearance in the 1920s. The house is unified by materials and form, and reflects the influence of Italianate, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman styles. The house is well maintained and for the past several years has operated as a formal dining restaurant.

The Creasy House was not included in the 2012 Gretna Downtown Historic District. Non-contributing resources are located between the dwelling and the historic district, and the dwelling did not conform to the identified areas of significance for the historic district (commerce and transportation). The house was recorded in 2010 and at that time was determined to be potentially eligible by DHR staff. This update provides evidence that the resource retains its integrity, historical appearance and character, and for the above reasons is recommended as eligible for NRHP listing under Criteria B and C.

#### Sources:

Bell, Robert T. *11<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry*. Lynchburg, VA: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1985.

Creasy, Cecil A., Jr. Interview with Debra McClane, 09 July 2014, in Gretna, Virginia.

Markham, Jerald H. *11<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry: A Regimental History. Volume 1—The Roster*. Athens, GA: New Papyrus Publishing, 2011.

Tyler, Estelle Ironmonger. *The Junction—Elba—Gretna, Virginia*. Gretna, VA: By author, 1990.

Tyler, Lyon G. *Men of Mark in Virginia: Ideals of American Life, A Collection of Biographies of the Leading Men in the State*. Volume III. Washington, D.C.: Men of Mark Publishing, 1907.

*Pittsylvania County, Virginia—Heritage, 1767-2004*. Volume 1. [Danville, VA]: Pittsylvania County Heritage Book Committee and County Heritage, Inc., 2004.

U.S. Census Bureau. Population Schedule, Campbell County, Virginia 1860

U.S. Census Bureau. Population Schedule, Pittsylvania County, 1880, 1900, 1910.

**Legal Owner(s) of the Property** (For more than one owner, please use a separate sheet.)Mr. ☒ Mrs. ☐ Dr. ☐  
Miss ☐ Ms. ☐ Hon. ☐

Cecil Creasy

(Name)

1213 Culbreth Dr.

(Address)

Wilmington

(City)

NC

(State)

28405

(Zip Code)

ccreasy@capital-invest.com

(Email Address)

910-509-7093

(Daytime telephone including area code)

Owner's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**• • Signature required for processing all applications. • •**

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: N/A

Daytime Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant Information** (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Dr. ☐  
Miss ☐ Ms. ☐ Hon. ☐

Debra A. McClane

(Name)

Debra A. McClane,  
Architectural Historian

4711 Devonshire Road

(Address)

Richmond

(City)

VA

(State)

23225

(Zip Code)

dmcclane1@verizon.net

(Email Address)

804/233-3890

(Daytime telephone including area code)

Applicant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Notification**

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator or City Manager.

Mr. ☒ Mrs. ☐ Dr. ☐  
Miss ☐ Ms. ☐ Hon. ☐

David Lilly

(Name)

Town Manager

(Position)

Town of Gretna

(Locality)

P.O. Box 602

(Address)

Gretna

(City)

VA

(State)

24557

(Zip Code)

434-656-6572

(Daytime telephone including area code)

Please use the following space to explain why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

**The owner seeks listing as an acknowledgement of the historic associations of the property with the founding of the Town of Gretna and the contributions of T.C. Creasy to that effort. In addition, the owner would like to apply for rehabilitation tax credits for future projects.**

Would you be interested in the State and/or the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes ☒ No ☐Would you be interested in the easement program? Yes ☐ No ☒